

17. XXIV 5.

*Advice to Young Ministers, respecting their
preparatory Studies.*

S E R M O N,

Preached June 25, 1812,

IN

THE MEETING-HOUSE

IN

DEVONSHIRE-SQUARE, LONDON;

BEFORE THE

Subscribers to the Academical Institution

AT

Stepney,

FOR

**THE EDUCATION OF CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY,
OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION:**

Published at the request of

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THE BAPTIST CHURCH

OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

AND OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

AND OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF ARIZONA

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF NEW MEXICO

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF OKLAHOMA

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF IOWA

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF KANSAS

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF MISSOURI

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF NEBRASKA

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF NEVADA

AND OF THE TERRITORY OF WYOMING



HAVING been requested, by the Patrons of the Academical Institution at Stepney, for the Education of young Ministers of the Baptist Denomination, to undertake the present Service, I shall wave all apology for circumstances which may prevent my discharging it as I could wish; and conscious of the most cordial respect for them, and for my worthy brother the Tutor; as well as feeling a sincere solicitude for the welfare and usefulness of those hopeful young men, who have been first admitted to enjoy the advantage of his instructions, I request the special attention of the Students, and the candid regard of my audience in general, to some friendly advice, which I shall found upon

PROVERBS xviii. 1.

Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

THIS observation of Solomon may be frequently exemplified in persons who do not sustain the character

character of public teachers of religion. Some men destitute of a taste for divine wisdom, may have an ardent thirst after various profitable species of knowledge, which they endeavour to gratify in close retirement; while others privately pursue theological studies for their own satisfaction, but are prevented by their situation, by the want of a ready utterance, or by some other circumstance, from entering on the office of Ministers.

But however true Solomon's remark may be in a more extensive sense, there is no instance in which it will appear more pertinent and important, than in its application to those who are rightly preparing for the gospel ministry.

As this observation is suited to encourage the generous exertions of the respectable Society, newly formed in this Metropolis, to assist young men in the pursuit of their preparatory studies for the ministry; so it may lay a foundation for some seasonable counsel to my dear young brethren, who, by its benevolent assistance, enjoy leisure in a happy retirement, to seek and intermeddle with all wisdom.

I propose, therefore, to consider

- I. The proper Springs of Action which should influence a Student of Divinity.
- II. The Desirableness of a Season of Seclusion from the World, to prepare for an entrance on ministerial employment.
- III. The objects which demand the attention of those who are preparing for the Christian Ministry.

FIRST, Let us consider the proper Springs of Action which should influence a Student of Divinity.

Through Desire &c. He that would justify a hope of becoming eminent in any science should possess a thirst for knowledge, especially for that particular kind of knowledge in which he is expected to excel.

This is peculiarly necessary in the case of a Candidate for the evangelical Ministry. That sacred employment should be the object of his earnest

earnest desire. His own choice, and not the appointment or persuasion of others, should induce him to dedicate himself to theological pursuits. Though he should ordinarily submit his qualifications for the work to the judgement of others, and it is a pleasing circumstance when others perceive a man's talents before he is aware of them himself, yet he must have a taste, an inclination, a strong desire for the work; and that direct and immediate, not a merely subordinate inclination, subservient to some other end.

If a man would enter on this important and laborious work with any prospect of success, it must be undertaken not by constraint, but of a ready mind; not for filthy lucre's sake, nor for a livelihood, nor to gratify a spirit of curious speculation, nor under the influence of pride, ambition, or indolence: but he must love the work for its own sake. He who desires the office of a Bishop or Christian Pastor aright, desires it as a *good Work*, in which he resolves to labour with diligence and assiduity, well knowing its important use.

He must be influenced by an ardent desire to
know,

know, enjoy, resemble, serve and glorify God himself; and to bring others to unite with him in the same exalted purpose.

He must be actuated by a desire of being employed by the Redeemer, in assisting to gather in that harvest, which is to repay him for all the sorrows of his soul; for his agony and bloody sweat in Gethsemane, for his ignominious and painful death upon Golgotha.

Yes, he must unite in design and desire with Christ Jesus; and become deeply interested in that reward which will give to Christ himself complete and eternal satisfaction. Let us then reflect on the blessed object he undertook to accomplish, and which all his labors tended to secure. Let us remember that we are called to pursue the same design in unison with him, and to employ all our faculties in subserviency to that important end.

The object of his Desire, who is separated to the work of the Ministry, should be the good of souls, precious, immortal souls; that have been exposed by sin to eternal death, to the torments
of

of hell; that are perishing for lack of knowledge, that are plunging themselves into endless perdition. He should be actuated by the desire of opposing error and sin; of rescuing from mental bondage those who are led captive by the prince of darkness, and of bringing them to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. It must be his great desire to subserve the gracious purpose of God, to bring back sinners to himself, through the mediation of his dear Son, in such a way as that all his perfections shall be harmoniously displayed and eternally glorified in their salvation:

He must be influenced by a Desire, not merely of their security from destruction, but of their complete Conformity to God; longing to promote the happiness of his fellow-christians, by leading them farther into the knowledge of the unsearchable riches of Christ, that they may be filled with all the fulness of God: desiring to be instrumental in their attaining higher degrees of holiness and happiness, that they may enjoy God more, and bear more of his resemblance, being polished as his jewels, and prepared to adorn the Savior's crown. So Paul stated the object he had in view,
that

that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Nothing less than this can satisfy him whom God himself has separated to the work of the ministry.

Herein the Christian Minister desires the profit of succeeding generations. While disseminating truth, virtue and happiness, he is sowing the seed of future successive harvests, which shall be gathered in till time shall be no more.

Yes, the happy effects he wishes to produce will be eternal. An ancient Painter among the Greeks mistakenly said, "I paint for Eternity." Ah ! he knew not that this earth, and all it contains, shall be burnt up ; and though that awful conflagration has not yet taken place, the admirable productions of his art have long since been lost. But you, my young brethren, may adopt the language of this eminent artist, and it shall be no vain boast, no expression of enthusiasm, but words of truth and soberness. For the image of Christ, which the Spirit of God, by your instrumentality, shall paint on the soul, will bear no symptom of decay in millions of ages, but shall shine in more vivid colors, when the sun shall be turned into darkness. O think of Eternity!

nity ! keep Eternity in view, and the immensity of bliss to be enjoyed by every soul, which by your successful ministry shall be truly conveyed to God ! This is the Redeemer's recompence, and you shall enter into *his joy*.

SECONDLY, *Let us reflect on the Desirableness of a Season of Seclusion from the World, to prepare for an entrance on ministerial employment.*

Ancient Historians have recorded some curious anecdotes respecting the voluntary seclusion of Demosthenes, who was afterwards esteemed the prince of Orators. They inform us, he withdrew from society, and retired to a subterraneous cell, where for many months together, he applied his attention to pronunciation, to gesture, and to every other branch of that art, by which he procured such distinguished applause, and became so highly beneficial to his country.

Thus the Sentiment in our text might be illustrated by his example,

He who is separated will seek after the object of his desire ;

In all substantial wisdom will he busy himself.

But

But it applies still more forcibly to the case of young ministers, than to any other. They do well to separate themselves, that they may seek and intermeddle with all wisdom.

The Grace of God always occasions a separation from the world, both as to Ministers, and to private Christians. Though in the world, yet they are not of the world. It is no more their portion or their rest. As oil and water cannot mix even in the same vessel, so the spiritual man and the carnal man, though living under the same roof, will be separate. Oh that this were more the case !

But what I now recommend is rather occasional and restricted : it is a separation or seclusion for a time, from that intercourse with the world which private Christians are generally obliged to maintain : such a retirement as few Ministers can expect to enjoy, after they have entered more fully on their public employ.

It is desirable, before a man enter fully on this important work, that he be able to separate himself from the avocations of the world, from its
business

business and its cares, from its pleasures and its company, and in a retired situation, enjoy opportunity for the pursuit of useful knowledge, and the investigation of sacred truth.

Every Christian finds the advantage of seasons of retirement, for private devotion, self-examination, meditation and reading. Ministers especially, find it needful all through life, thus to exercise themselves unto godliness. But it is highly expedient, in a still greater degree, at their first entrance on that sacred calling.

It is then that young men stand most in need of this benefit, and can most profitably employ it. In early life the memory is more retentive than at a later period. This is the time to pursue subordinate studies, with greater assiduity than the multiplied duties of the pastoral office will admit. Then are they unencumbered with family concerns. For though we regard it as a doctrine of devils to forbid ministers of the word to marry, yet it is highly expedient for a young man to defer forming any intimate acquaintance with the other sex, till he has finished his preparatory studies; and indeed till providence has led him into a situation,

ation, where he will have a reasonable prospect of providing for the necessary expences of the married state.

It would be counterworking the design of an Academical Institution, for a student of divinity to indulge himself in frequent visiting, or in contracting an extensive acquaintance of any kind. The society of his fellow-students will generally be found a sufficient relief from the severity of solitary study. And it seems to me happy for those young persons who are preparing for the work of the ministry, to be dissociated from those who are intended for other occupations; especially from persons of an irreligious and dissipated character; the neglect of which in some seminaries has produced very baneful effects.

To be thus separated, having a few pious companions, freedom from all anxiety respecting the supply of temporal wants, access to various means of instruction, and the aid and counsel of an able, faithful and experienced Tutor, is a most invaluable blessing. Never may those who enjoy it give occasion for the painful enquiry in the preceding chapter, "Wherefore is there a price
in

in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?"—But

THIRDLY, *Let us notice the principal Objects which demand the attention of those who are preparing for the Christian Ministry.*

Such should seek to intermeddle with all substantial Wisdom. And oh that nothing may be attended to, in the seminary which has occasioned our present meeting, but what deserves this name; and shall be rendered subservient to the highest and most exalted wisdom! May the present set of Students, and all those who shall succeed them, remember that the chief business of every one who is separated to the work of the ministry, is to enter deeply into those treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are hid in Christ Jesus.

If any one lack this wisdom, let him in the first place, importunately ask it of God, who giveth liberally, and without upbraiding, unto all who seek it with their whole heart. Remember, my dear young friends, that no advantages will be profitable to the main object of your pursuit, if
secret

secret Devotion be neglected. Pray fervently for the influences of the Holy Spirit as the sum of all good. Seek from him a sanctified heart, a holy mental taste, a spirit congenial with the Truth ; thus you will naturally imbibe just and scriptural ideas of divine things.

Let the Christian Student diligently search the holy Scriptures, praying that the word of Christ may dwell in him richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Let him view all truth in connection with its central point. Remember the import of those emphatic, scriptural phrases, The preaching of the *Cross*, The Truth as it is in *Jesus*, and The Doctrine which is according to *Godliness*. Let every antecedent Truth be pursued till it leads your hearers to the cross of Christ ; let every consequent Truth be deduced from the same point, and enforced by evangelical motives.

Be concerned also, to study Divinity practically and devotionally. Enquire, What affections towards God should *this* truth excite ? For what purpose is *it* revealed in the divine word ? What

use

use can I make of *it* in my own practice ? Do I indeed fall in with *its* genuine tendency ? Do I labor to impress my hearers with the importance of the end for which *it* was revealed ?

Let him thankfully use the assistance of the most eminent servants of God, judicious expositors, and other pious and learned writers. Not indeed calling any one master, or implicitly embracing his sentiments ; but carefully examining them by the standard of truth : and yet not arrogantly despising them, as though he were more likely to find out the truth by himself, than any of those who have gone before him.

Study the practice of genuine piety, as exemplified in the Lives of holy men of God, such as Joseph Alleine, the Henrys, the Mathers, Doddridge, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Hallyburton, Pearce, Newton, Cecil, &c. I am mistaken if I have not learnt more of the essence of true Religion from the life of Brainerd, than from all other uninspired writings. And no late publication seems to me more replete with wise instructions for a young minister, than Mr. Cecil's Life and Remains. One of his maxims

ims I recollect, which by its adoption may save some of my young friends many trials and difficulties. "Do not be too quick-eared, too sharp-sighted, and too nimble-tongued."*

But, in strict subserviency to the study of Divinity, a wise student will seek to intermeddle with all Wisdom.

The London Education Society was not instituted with a design to *make men Ministers*, as some express themselves, who misconceive our object, if they do not wilfully misrepresent it, but to *make young Ministers better Scholars*. None are received by our Committee into the Academy at Bristol, but those who have been recommended by our Churches, as possessing, in the judgement of charity, genuine piety and promising talents ; and I doubt not of my brethren who direct the Institution at Stepney being equally careful in examining those whom they admit. God alone, however, can search the heart,

* If this be disregarded, you may be reminded of an observation, which I learnt in my youth, "Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other, and scarce in that."

and

and human foresight will be sometimes disappointed. Yet we have reason to hope that such disappointments will not frequently occur, if our Churches discourage conceited youths, who despise instruction, and encourage only those who are willing to comply with the counsel given in the text.

This Institution, indeed, wisely affords its assistance to some, whose advancing years, preceding disadvantages, and more slender capacities, may not admit the expectation of their becoming eminent scholars. But let every one, according to his ability and opportunity, aim at extensive improvement. Only let all your attainments be rendered subservient to the principal object you have in view.

Some injudicious Professors of Christianity have strangely slighted literature ; but though we readily allow it to be unnecessary for every minister to possess much of what is commonly called learning, yet, in the present day, when the advantages of education are more common among our hearers, we think it at least highly expedient that every large body of Christians should possess
some

some learned ministers ; and the greater their number and attainments the better.

How advantageous to a public Teacher is an accurate knowledge of his own language, so as readily to comprehend the true meaning of authors, and to express himself with ease and perspicuity.

Nor is it less desirable that his reasoning should be clear and convincing ; that he should be able to detect and expose the sophistical argumentations of those who oppose the truth, and to express himself in the manner best suited to produce strong and lasting impressions on the minds of his hearers.

The knowledge of those ancient languages in which the scriptures were originally written, is also an important acquisition ; and though we have no other writings than the thirty-nine small books of the Old Testament extant in the pure Hebrew, yet advantage may be derived from an acquaintance with the cognate dialects, especially the Chaldee, in which Daniel and Ezra have inserted the original records which they quoted ; and also from the knowledge of the Targums or paraphrases

paraphrases of the Jews. And a wise man may turn to good account the knowledge of their later writings, though full of absurdities and blasphemy against our Savior. As to the New Testament it is written in a language long cultivated with the utmost care, by many writers of extraordinary genius, an acquaintance with whose admired productions will be of great assistance, in a critical examination of the twenty-seven books written by the Evangelists and Apostles.

The knowledge of ancient History, of Jewish Antiquities, of the customs and manners of eastern Nations, as well as those of the Greeks and Romans, will assist a minister in the elucidation of many passages of scripture; and may be used to confirm the history and doctrines of the Bible, and for various other valuable purposes.

The study of the heathen writers, not only of the historians, but of the philosophers and even of the poets, will lead a sanctified mind to thankfulness for the gospel; in as much as they shew the blindness of mankind, when left to unassisted reason, in respect of religion, and the true standard of morality.

Were

Were some of our young ministers well instructed in the modern, living languages of foreign countries, they would be able to obtain a better knowledge of the state of the church in other protestant countries; or it might prepare the way for diffusing evangelical light, in popish, mahometan, and pagan countries.

An acquaintance with Geography and History, and especially with the present moral state of mankind, would be the means of increasing our sense of the direful evil of sin, and of exciting our tenderest compassion for a world that lies in wickedness and woe.

An extensive knowledge of the remoter works of creation, the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and the fixed laws by which the planetary worlds are governed, tends to enlarge our views of the omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness of the Most High.

The knowledge of Arithmetic and the Mathematics, though not necessarily connected with Theology, will in many respects be serviceable, and better qualify a minister of the Gospel to instruct

struct youth in commercial and civil concerns ; and thus enable him, if called to labour among a poor people, who can raise but a slender provision, to support his family by the assistance of a reputable school.

BUT waving farther enlargement on these topics, let me address a few words more directly to my young friends, who now enjoy the opportunity of gratifying their desire after such knowledge as may promote their usefulness in the church of God.

You came hither recommended by Christian Churches, before whom you had solemnly professed Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Your Pastors and Brethren, who had long been acquainted with you, testified their pleasing hope, that you were not only partakers of the grace of God yourselves, but affectionately desirous of the salvation of souls, and in some measure qualified to edify the Church of God, by the gifts imparted to you from its exalted Head.

I trust that in no one instance the hope of the churches will be disappointed. But if you are duly sensible of the deceitfulness of sin, and know the plague of your own hearts, you will permit me to charge you to look well to the springs of action. And should you have the clearest evidence that you entered upon the work with right motives, you will nevertheless find it needful to watch, lest some sinister end should divert your minds from the true aim of a christian minister, and so impede your progress. SELF, the worst of all Idols, will seduce you from your proper mark, unless, by watchfulness and prayer, you continually guard against it, under all the multiform shapes, which like the fabled Proteus it can assume.

My Brethren ! if our work be entered upon with unholy motives, they will not only unfit us for the prosecution of it with success, but greatly aggravate our guilt and condemnation. Having surrendered ourselves to the Lord, let us with the greatest sincerity and carefulness stand to the surrender, and daily renew our dedication to God our Savior.

God has raised you up friends among those
with

with whom you had no previous acquaintance, but who are become your benefactors for Christ's sake, and readily administer to your present support, in hope that our churches may be furnished with a succession of able and faithful ministers. Disappoint not their expectations, nor those of the churches which recommended you to their patronage.

Your upright and affectionate Tutor, I am well assured, is most earnestly concerned for your comfort, your improvement, your honor and your usefulness in the church of God. Do not through negligence or inattention, levity or ingratitude, render his responsible, laborious, and anxious station, more burdensome than it necessarily is by the duties it imposes.

“As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold,
“So is a wise reprove on an obedient ear.”

While, in this state of seclusion from the world, you are relieved from many of its cares and temptations, neglect not the utmost improvement of present advantages; but with frequent and fervent prayer unite diligent labor.

Yet

Yet beware of injuring your health by application beyond your strength, and especially by night-studies. I remember hearing a very ingenious man boast of his being master of all the four and twenty hours, but a premature old-age and the early decay of his admirable faculties may serve to warn others from imitating his example.

I earnestly advise you to keep the various objects of your studies in a due subordination. Let not secular learning occasion a neglect of theology, or inattention to the sacred scriptures, and to the frame of your own hearts.

Beware, I beseech you, lest you, the future guides of our churches, should prove snares to one another, during your association in the Academy; but while you kindly assist each other in the pursuit of literary knowledge, let each strengthen the other in God, and stir him up to ardent piety. Beware of youthful levity, of jesting with scripture language, of trifling on the Lord's day, or with holy things. So far as it depends on you, keep up order in the family, and let those in the lowest stations in the household see that you are holy men of God. Tempt not
c
irreligious

irreligious servants to say, "We cannot think there is any reality in the religion these people profess, when we see their young ministers conduct themselves in so strange and unbecoming a manner!" I am not recommending an affected gravity, much less a churlish moroseness; but an unfeigned regard to a course of conduct consistent with your avowed character, as the truly devoted servants of Jesus Christ, the lights of the world, the salt of the earth.

I beg leave to warn you against the formation of a habit of hearing the word merely as critics. You are called, to a certain extent, to criticise each others exercises; but let this be done with modesty and tenderness, for the correction of mistakes and needless singularities; and while you correct them in others, spare them not in yourselves. Take care, however, lest you habituate yourselves to pay more attention to the manner of delivery, than to the matter of the discourse.

Beware, on the one hand, of the implicit submission of your judgement to that of even the wisest and best of men; and, on the other, of despising

despising and undervaluing the judgement of others, under the ridiculous pretence of thinking for yourselves. Lean not to your own understanding, but try every sentiment by the standard of the divine word.

Perhaps you will the better remember an important caution, if I convey it in the words of the Freemason's Motto, *Keep within compass*. A man who regards that maxim will make a more creditable appearance with a moderate share of learning, than he who, having made a greater proficiency, disregards it. Meddle not with what you understand but imperfectly, except for your own improvement. He who is ever eager to shew all he knows, will often display his ignorance. Instead of indulging a forward boldness, be modest, and rather backward in speaking before others, especially before your elders. Generally wait till your opinion is requested, on points liable to be disputed, and then deliver it with caution and respect. In almost all Controversies endeavour to keep on the defensive; especially concerning those subjects on which good men differ.

Always

Always shew you are more concerned to turn sinners to God, than to make proselytes to a party. While you teach men to observe all things whatsoever our blessed Lord has commanded, whether with reference to moral duty, or positive institutions, let it appear, in the latter case, that you regard the thing signified as far more important than the sign.

In administering the Ordinances of the New Testament be careful to point out their important signification. Urge them who are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, to remember their obligations to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness ; to be separate from the world and devoted to God. What avails the observance of a more significant and scriptural mode of administering the ordinance, if its end be not kept constantly in view? It is not the Baptism of *adults*, but of *believers*, for which we plead ; let them who profess to have believed, be urged so to walk as to prove they abide in him, whose name they bear. Let them live the life of faith, and fight the good fight of faith. He that believeth and is Baptized shall be saved. Were the Greek term translated, I am persuaded it should be rendered

dered, He that believeth and is *immersed* or *overwhelmed* &c. Overwhelmed with what? with Water? Yes, that is the sign, and thus only we think the ordinance should be administered. But, what is the thing signified? He that is overwhelmed with a sense of Obligation, of Guilt, of Danger, of Gratitude, of Love; he that is immersed in the Holy Spirit, shall be saved. We had rather have the thing signified without the sign, than the sign without the thing signified: though we think both should go together. Thus with respect to the Lord's Supper, bread and wine are the sign, feeding on Christ by faith, is the thing signified. May we ever inculcate the necessity of making redemption by the Lamb of God the daily food of the soul, which imparts consolation to our hearts, and invigorates every holy disposition.

Seek earnestly from the God of all grace a tender affection for the souls of men; and let this be manifest in all your discourses, but especially on the severer subjects. In the exercise of your ministry be careful to unite a gentleness of manner,* with a decided attachment to the truth, and

* *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.*

a faithful manifestation of it to every man's conscience. Disgust not your hearers, by a dictatorial air, by harshness of temper, or by violence of manner. A wise preacher will seek out acceptable words. But if you would have the words of truth fastened like nails in a sure place, learn to penetrate the heart with gentleness and meekness of wisdom. We know the human heart is very hard, but sometimes the fault of the preacher occasions the truth to rebound, when a different manner would make a more favorable impression. Perform faithfully an embassy for Christ, to deluded, obstinate rebels ; and let the remembrance that you were once under the same infatuation, and involved in the same condemnation, excite your affectionate commiseration of their deplorable state. Though you must never justify their revolt, palliate their criminality, nor adulterate the truth, yet allow me to remind you, that the harsher your subject (and you dare by no means omit a harsh subject in its proper place) the more tender should you be in your manner of delivering it. In short let the same mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus, when he beheld the city, inhabited by his future murderers, and wept over it.

You

You serve a God worthy to be trusted with the entire management of the Universe; and I marvel how any one who is acquainted with his true Character should be stumbled at the idea of his knowing and regulating the end from the beginning. Why should a good man be more happy in the hope that God will make the best of a bad situation of affairs, which he did not foresee, or could not prevent; than in the persuasion that he is executing his own perfect all-comprehensive plan? But let us ever remember that the doctrine of his decrees affords no excuse, either for our negligence, or for the inattention and disobedience of our hearers.

I have known wise and good men attempt to explain away Ezek. xviii. 32, or xxxiii. 11. by comparing it with Jer. xxvii. 13. and suppose they should thus lessen the difficulty of reconciling God's solemn expostulation with the Doctrine of Predestination: as if He might consistently reprove the Jews for non-submission to Nebuchadnezzar, though he foreknew they would not submit, and did not intend to incline them so to do; but could not consistently direct the prophet to reprove them for non-submission to himself, unless

unless he had decreed to give them grace to submit! May not any one upon close reflection see, that if there be any impropriety in the one case, there must be no less in the other? And must not this be acknowledged, unless we would say, that God has absolutely determined who shall submit to Christ; but had not absolutely determined who should submit to Nebuchadnezzar, nor who by their refusal should incur the penalty of death, by the sword, by the famine, or by the pestilence.

It has for many years appeared to me, that the shortest method of preventing the *abuse* of the doctrine of the divine decrees, is to consider their *extent*. Can any consistent Predestinarian deny the doctrine of the Assembly of Divines, in their Catechism? viz. "God's decrees are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory, he has fore-ordained *whatsoever* comes to pass." But if this doctrine be admitted, it will follow, either that the decrees of God exclude the propriety of using means and motives, commands and invitations, warnings and exhortations, reproofs and censures in *all* cases; or that they exclude them in *no* case. And certainly, neither Ezekiel nor Paul exclude them, with

with reference either to the duty of ministers, or of their hearers, in the spiritual concerns of men.

I remember, a little before I left Northampton* there was a dreadful fire, when eight persons perished in the flames, and that the Watchman was said to have been prevented from giving an early alarm, by his Intoxication. Now supposing this to be true, would not every one consider him as highly criminal, and accessory to the death of these persons? And though I would not lightly introduce a reference to the divine decrees, yet if any one had asked me, while I was surveying the scorched bodies that were taken out of the ruins, and laid in the church, do you think God had decreed that these persons should be burnt to death? I durst not have affirmed, that this awful event had taken place without his foreknowledge, and in every sense against his will. But had I been in the Watchman's place, I should have expected their blood to be required at my hand. Nor do I less believe, that the blood of souls will be required at my hands, if I preach not Christ, "warning every man, and teaching

* Feb. 17, 1792.

every man," who attends my ministry, "in all wisdom; laboring and striving, that I may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." And though our Lord repeatedly asserted, "Many are called, but few chosen," yet this doctrine will neither lessen my guilt, if I shun to declare the whole counsel of God; nor the guilt of my hearers, if they reject the counsel of God against themselves.

Watch then, my dear Brethren, for souls, as those that must give an account; and as those who consider the approbation of their blessed Lord, and the salvation of their fellow-immortals, an ample compensation for all the labors and sufferings that can be endured, in the longest period in which you can hope to discharge an embassy for God on earth.

Time forbids farther enlargement. I close with an earnest aspiration to God, for the abundant success of the London Academical Institution; praying that God may render my dear Brother the Tutor, the honored instrument of training up for his service a number of faithful, zealous, successful Ministers, who shall be eminent
blessings

blessings to our churches, when I, and all the companions of my youth who yet remain, shall no longer be able to speak one word for God. Oh that I may then be employed with them, and with those that have gone before us, in singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Amen !



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